

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO USIA WASHDC

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AMCONSUL HONG KONG

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USIAC

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: DELAY OF NEWSWEEK JULY 11 ISSUE; NEWS BLOCKOUT ON NARONG'S
RETURN

1. NEWSWEEK JULY 11 ISSUE, DUE ON NEWSSTANDS JULY 6, CONTAINING
INTERPRETIVE ARTICLE ON CURRENT RTG INSTABILITY AND RECENT THAI
DEVELOPMENTS BY HONG KONG CORRESPONDENT HOLGER JENSEN, WAS DELAYED
BY RTG AUTHORITIES BUT RELEASED UNCUT FOR NEWSSTAND SALES
JULY 12. WHETHER DELAY RESULTED FROM DESIRE TO SOFTEN ARTICLE'S
IMPACT BY UNDERCUTTING TIMELINESS OR FROM INTERNAL DISCUSSION IN
RTG IS UNKNOWN.

2. ARTICLE REFERS TO INTERVIEW WITH PM THANIN, WHO AT ONE POINT
TOLD JENSEN " I HOPE I WILL LIKE WHAT I'M GOING TO READ."
JULY 25 ISSUE IN WORKS REPORTEDLY WILL CARRY FURTHER JENSEN
PIECE FEATURING Q-A INTERVIEWS WITH PM THANIN, INTERIOR MINISTER
SAMAK AND EXILED INTELLECTUAL DR. PUALI UNKPAKORN, REGIME'S
FOREMOST OVERSEAS CRITIC. EXPECTATION IS THAT INTERVIEW WITH
LATTER WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO CIRCULATE.

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3. STANDARD RTG PRACTICE ON FOREIGN PERIODICALS IS FOR POLICE AND
CUSTOMS OFFICIALS TO SCAN INCOMING MEDIA FOR MATERIAL ON THAILAND
AND PASS ANYTHING QUESTIONABLE TO INTERIOR MINISTRY FOR FINAL
DECISION.

4. INUNRELATED DEVELOPMENT, RTG OFFICIALS SUMMONED LOCAL EDITORS
OVER WEEKEND AND DIRECTED THEM NOT TO PUBLISH ANY NEWS OF

COL. NARONG KITTIKACHORN'S RETURN. ONE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT WHO HEARD ABOUT MEETING IN ADVANCE AND ASKED TO BE ADMITTED WAS PERMITTED TO DO SO, TREATED CORDIALLY, AND WAS ASKED POLITELY NOT TO REPORT NEWS OF NARONG'S RETURN. CORRESPONDENT REPLIED THAT SOTRY HAD ALREADY BEEN FILED. TO DATE, NO NEWS OF NARONG'S RETURN HAS BEEN CARRIED IN BANGKOK MEDIA, WITH EXCEPTION OF STORY IN SIANG PUANG CHON FIRST EDITION JULY 11 WHICH WAS SUPPOSEDLY IN PRINT BEFORE RTG'S STOP ORDER WAS ISSUED. SIANG PUANG CHON WAS CLOSED JULY 12 FOR INDEFINITE PERIOD FOR CARRYING A "PROHIBITED NEWS STORY WHICH COULD CAUSE PANIC AMONG THE GENERAL PUBLIC," BUT HAS APPEALED TO THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR. MEANWHILE, BANGKOK'S THREE LEADING PRESS ASSOCIATIONS ARE EXPECTED TO ASK THE GOVERNMENT TO POSTPONE A MEETING SCHEDULED FOR TOMORROW TO DISCUSS GOVERNMENT-MEDIA RELATIONS. THE ASSOCIATION, REPORTEDLY DISTURBED BY THE EMBARGO ON NARONG'S PRESENCE, ASKED POSTPONEMENT"UNTIL THE ATMOSPHERE IS MORE APPROPRIATE," WHICH ACCORDING TO USIS SOURCES, MEANS UNTIL THERE IS A POSSIBILITY OF SOMETHING MORE THAN A LECTURE FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

WKNOTE: LATE WEDNESDAY, SIANG PUANG CHON RECEIVED GOVERNMENTAL PERMISSION TO RESUME PUBLICATION WITH THE JULY 14 EDITIONS, AND IN AN APPARENTLY RELATED MOVE,THE JOURNALIST ASSOCIATIONS AGREED TO MEET WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS JULY 14 IN THE PRESS SEMINAR.)
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